2008 MAINE FOLK ART TRAIL

The Rufus Porter Museum enters its fourth year and is now officially recognized at a national level! The best news is that we have been selected to participate in the Maine Folk Art Trail from June through October of 2008. We are so excited about this that we want to tell you the story of where we are today especially since the Folk Art Trail anticipates over 100,000 visitor throughout Maine.

First, a little history lesson:

Bridgton was a major center of wealth and art in the early 1800s, for which there has been little recognition in the historical art world. By exhibiting major pieces of folk art created in our area, we are changing the perception of Western Maine from being a wilderness to one of high accomplishment during this early period. We will have major art pieces by the best known artists of the period, including John Brewster, Jr., J.H. Davis, William Prior, John Mead and James Lombard, which will document the high quality of art produced in Bridgton. Accompanied by the well known images of art produced by Bridgton’s native son, Rufus Porter, the objects shown will have a long lasting impression on folk art collectors throughout the country.

We encourage you to visit the exhibit at the Rufus Porter Museum as well as the other 10 participating museums, and to recognize the role of Maine Heritage as among those creating the best of folk art in the country.

The participating museums include Colby College Museum of Art (Waterville), Maine State Museum (Augusta), Maine Maritime Museum (Bath), Farnsworth Art Museum (Rockland), Penobscot Marine Museum (Searsport), Maine Historical Society (Portland), Museums at Old York (York), Saco Museum (Saco), Bates College Art Museum (Lewiston), Sabbathday Lake Shaker Museum (New Gloucester) and the Rufus Porter Museum (Bridgton).

MEMBERS ONLY OPENING RECEPTION

Save the date! Monday, June 2nd from 5-7pm, the Museum will host a Members Only Champagne Opening Reception for our 2008 Folk Art exhibit. Our members are very dear to us as supporters and very special friends. Please plan to join us for this evening of fun, food and champagne and a chance to see this summer’s extraordinary exhibit.

Uncommon TREASURES

The Maine Folk Art Trail has produced “Folk Art in Maine, Uncommon Treasures, 1750-1925”, edited by Kevin D. Murphy with photography by Ellen McDermott. Including an introduction by Stacy C. Hollander, Senior Curator, American Folk Art Museum, the book will be available at the Museum gift shop and on our website for $35. Twelve objects from the Rufus Porter Museum exhibit are included in this book of 100 of the best folk art examples in Maine.

IN THE NEWS

The Museum has attracted some major publicity in the past few months. Yankee Magazine has chosen us as an “Editors’ Choice” for their annual Yankee Magazine’s Travel Guide to New England.

The Museum will be listed on YankeeMagazine.com. The site and the magazine have a circulation of over 2 million people who are passionate about New England and travel here.

Other publications including Lake Living, Down East, Early American Life, Antiques and Arts Weekly (Newtown Bee), Antiques and Fine Arts and Old House Interiors have featured the Museum recently or will be in upcoming issues.

Rufus Porter Museum
2008 Folk Art Exhibit Catalog
Dedicated to Bob Dunning and Donald Johnson in appreciation for their efforts in saving the present Rufus Porter Museum house in 1986, thus preserving it for the Town of Bridgton and folk art lovers throughout the country.

28 pages in full color
$16 each
CULTURAL HERITAGE SERIES 2008
Final plans are underway for the 2008 Cultural Heritage Series, scheduled for Tuesday, July 8 through Saturday July 12th. There is still room to register for many of the classes. Signing up is easy; just call 207-647-2828 and we will process your registration over the telephone with a Visa or MasterCard. Information on all the classes is available on our website at www.rufusporter museum.org.

ANTIQUE APPRAISALS: Thursday, July 10th, Ron Bourgeault (antiques, $10 per item) & Bonnie Dwyer (quilts, $25 per quilt) will be doing appraisals at the Bridgton Town Hall on N. High Street from 3-5pm. This is a great opportunity to learn about your favorite antique and its value.

KEYNOTE: Be sure to plan on attending Ron Bourgeault’s keynote speech “Collecting Folk Art on a Shoestring or with a Pot of Gold” on Thursday evening (7 - 8:30pm) at the new Magic Lantern Theater. Ron is owner of Northeast Auctions and frequently seen as an appraiser on PBS’s Antique Roadshow.

A list of all the classes and workshops offered is below.

Mural Painting
Rufus Porter Wall Mural Painting
Folk Painting
Decorative Painting
Country (Vinegar) Graining
The Folk Art Santa Sleigh
Antique Finishes for Home
Theorem Painting
Ukrainian Egg Decoration
Fiber Arts
Care/Repair of Antique Quilts
A Stitch in Time
Rag Baskets
Felting
Hooked Rugs, Waldoboro
Historic Crafts
Herbal Wreath Making
Exploring Gourd Art
Tying Maine Streamers
Broom Making
DIY for Your Old House
Practical Pres. Old Homes
Window Repair
Old Plaster Repair
A Step Back in Time
Historic Barns
Introduction to Genealogy
Herbal Walk into the Past
Genealogy & the Internet
Herbal Remedies
Gravestone Conservation

NEW BOARD MEMBER AND EMPLOYEE
We welcomed Steve Munger to the Board of Directors in January who assumed the office of Treasurer. Steve retired in 2007 from the Academic Dean position at Bridgton Academy after a long career in college counseling and development. His expertise brings a needed dimension to the board.

Realizing that the upcoming Maine Folk Art Trail would require the Museum to increase its program, the Board voted in October to ask Nancy Smoak to become our first paid employee as Projects Director. A tireless volunteer since the museum’s first inception, her efforts this winter will allow the Museum to better deal with the expected influx of visitors. The Cultural Heritage Series brochure was mailed in November, a catalog of this summer’s folk art exhibit has been created, several books have been reprinted for our gift shop, all of which Nancy organized. She has office in our Annex location at the Wales & Hamblen building (where the Westwood murals are on exhibit) through the winter and will move back to the Museum in May.

DOCENTS
What would we do without our volunteer docents...not much, I’m afraid! Our docents are essential to the operation of the museum. We can’t thank them enough! We welcome them back warmly and are pleased that 90% are returning for this coming summer. They know our need is great!”

The Museum will be open five days a week from 11 to 5 and we are hoping for a commitment of two 3-hour shifts a month. The first training date will be on Thursday, May 29, at 9:30 am to 12 noon to acquaint docents with the 2008 folk art exhibit.

There will be a later session for docents not available in early June. Please call Nancy at 647-2828 if you would like to join and become more involved with our programs.

THANK YOU...THANK YOU...THANK YOU

2008 INTERNS
Four interns will be assisting the Museum staff this summer and fall. Please find time to stop in and welcome them. The intent of the intern program is to introduce future curators to Rufus Porter and encourage a love of the folk and decorative arts fields.

Suzanne Brennan will begin on May 18. From Canandaigua, NY, she is a student at the Ruth Flowers’ Early American Decorative Arts School located in Rochester, NY. She comes with a wealth of experience in gift shop and tour management.

Stella Smith, a Master of Historic Preservation student at the University of Georgia will begin on May 24th. She holds BA’s in Art History and in Classical Culture and is really looking forward to her first trip to Maine.

Brianna McNelly graduated Magna cum Laude from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN last December. She has tutored students in writing and is a Curatorial Intern at the Plains Art Museum. Brianna arrives on June 6th.

Tashia Dare graduates this May from the University of Kansas with a BA in History of Art. She has been the Assistant Curator for the Wilcox Classical Museum and an intern at the Clendening History of Medicine Museum. Starting on the 15th of July, Tashia will also be visiting Maine for the first time.
Rufus Porter Rediscovered by Jean Lipman (1980) is now available for purchase at the Rufus Porter Museum gift shop for $30 each. Through a combined effort of our museum and the family of Jean Lipman we have been able to reprint this informative and fascinating book. Included are 22 full color plates of Porter’s murals, a chronology of his life, genealogical information, a listing of known murals by Porter (as of 1980) as well as a Forward by Gerald Piel, Editor of Scientific American magazine in 1965.

The book measures 10 3/4” x 8 1/4”, has over 200 pages and is soft bound.

MEMBERSHIPS

Our new membership year begins on July 1. Your memberships have provided the Museum valuable operating funds allowing us to make small improvements to the parking, office space, the Howe mural exhibit at the Wales & Hamblen building and this year repainting of the interior walls at the Museum. This fall, we hope to build a handicapped accessible bathroom for the museum, and insulate the museum to allow year round use of the building. One hundred percent of your donations are used to benefit the Museum.

Please Join Us

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Make checks payable to THE RUFUS PORTER MUSEUM, PO Box 544, Bridgton, ME 04009

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The Rufus Porter Museum is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

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CURIOUS ARTS by RUFUS PORTER

For sale this summer in our gift shop will be three different reproduction books by Rufus Porter. These very rare books are either owned by private collectors or seen through glass encasements with no opportunity to read Porter’s words.

Although all of the books are versions of Curious Arts each of the books has unique aspects.

The 1826 version is a first edition that has an Appendix with a listing of “various articles mentioned in the preceding pages, with the prices, explanations, etc.” For example “Glue (gelatine)” is described as “a jelly procured from skins of animals” and is available for 25 cents a pound.

The 1831 version is the last known Curious Arts and has additional information on “methods of dying”.

And finally, in collaboration with Old Sturbridge Village, the Rufus Porter Museum is reprinting the first known book by Rufus Porter (c. 1820). The actual title of the book is “A Select Collection of Approved, Genuine, Secret, and Modern Receipts, For the Preparation and Execution of Various Valuable and Curious Arts, As practiced by the best Artists of the present Age.” This 48-page book contains chapters on such topics as “To make Shellac Varnish for Japanning” and “To change the color of a horse from black to white”.

Each of the books will be available for $30 each.
MAJOR ACQUISITION

Through a directed donation, the Rufus Porter Museum has returned a major folk portrait of a local family to Bridgton.

Samuel Farnsworth, Jr. MD (1792-1842), son of Bridgton’s first physician, attended Bridgton Academy and studied medicine with his father. When his father died in 1817, Samuel Jr. took over the practice. He was made a trustee of Bridgton Academy and in 1825 built a beautiful home in North Bridgton on what is now Harrison Road.

In the portrait Samuel is shown with his wife, Nancy Mussey Farnsworth (1797-1882) and four of their eventual five children. The children are Harriet (1819-1848), George (1821-1847), Charles (b. 1823) and Caroline (b. 1835).

The portrait was painted in 1827 by George Washington Appleton. Appleton was born in Maine and in 1829 moved to Boston and there began to achieve recognition as a portrait painter. This group portrait of the Farnsworth family is considered to be his finest work.

Dr. Samuel I. Farnsworth, Jr. Family Portrait
Oil on Canvas, 37” x 48”
Signed on reverse stretcher: Appleton, 1827
Painted by George Washington Appleton (1805-1831)